

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O 041626Z SEPT 75 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4954

INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAKAR IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T ABIDJAN 7619

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, US, IV

SUBJECT: ISRAELI DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH AFRICA

REF: STATE 209708

1. IVORY COAST WAS LAST MAJOR AFRICAN COUNTRY TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL FOLLOWING OCTOBER 1973 WAR. DECISION WAS MADE BY PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY WITH GREAT RELUCTANCE AND PERSONAL ANGUISH AT HAVING TO RUPTURE RELATIONS WITH A COUNTRY WITH WHICH IVORY COAST HAD BEEN CLOSE AND FRIENDLY. AFRO-ARAB PRESSURES ON GOIC HAD BEEN TREMENDOUS, HOWEVER. HOUPHOUET MAY HAVE BEEN CONCERNED FOR HIS PERSONAL SECURITY, AND IN ANY EVENT FELT IVORY COAST COULD NOT AFFORD ISOLATION FROM OTHER OAU STATES ON ISRAELI ISSUE. SINCE 1973 IVORY COAST HAS ACCEPTED OAU MAJORITY POSITION CALLING FOR ISRAELI EVACUATION OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE. ALTHOUGH SENIOR IVORIAN OFFICIALS SPEAK FAVORABLY AND ADMIRINGLY OF ISRAEL, QUESTION ARISES WHETHER EGYPT-ISRAEL ACCORDS CONSTITUTE SUFFICIENT PROGRESS TOWARD OAU DEMANDS FOR IVORY COAST TO JUSTIFY RESUMPTION. IT ALSO MIGHT BE DIFFICULT TO DEMONSTRATE

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ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ADVANTAGES WHICH WOULD ACCRUE TO
IVORY COAST FROM SUCH A MOVE.

2. EMBASSY ASSESSMENT OF QUESTIONS RAISED REFTEL:

A. POSSIBILITY OF NORMALIZING ISRAELI-IVORY COAST RELATIONS
AT THIS TIME. KEY TO THIS POSSIBILITY WOULD BE REACTION OF
OTHER OAU STATES TO SUCH A PROJECTED MOVE. IVORY COAST WOULD
IN PRINCIPLE WISH TO RESUME RELATIONSBUT WOULD NOT RPT NOT
TAKE SUCH A STEP ALONE. GOIC WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY WISH
TO CONCERT ANY ACTION ON ITS PART WITH SIMILAR MOVES BY OTHER
AFRICAN MODERATES. AT SAME TIME GOIC WOULD NO DOUBT WISH
TO BE ASSURED THAT ACTION WOULD NOT RESULT IN OAU AFRO-ARAB
EXPLOSION. ALTHOUGH AFRO-ARAB UNITY IN OAU HAS APPEARED TO BE
WEAKENING RECENTLY, IT STILL IS A PREDOMINANT FACTOR IN IVORIAN
POLICY CONSIDERATIONS.

THE FINAL DECISION WOULD BE A PERSONAL ONE BY HOUPHOUET-
BOIGNY. HE HAS SHOWN IN PAST HIS WILLINGNESS TO TAKE UNPOPULAR
DECISIONS, AS FOR EXAMPLE HIS DIALOGUE POLICY ON SOUTH AFRICA.
HE IS WILLING TO TAKE RISKS IN HIS EFFORTS TO PLAY AN INTERNA-
TIONAL PEACE-MAKING ROLE. HE COULD WELL DECIDE TO
RESUME RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL IF HE THOUGHT IT WAS CONSISTENT
WITH HIS PEACE AND DIALOGUE POLICY AND IF HE WERE
CONVINCED THAT THE COST TO IVORY COAST WOULD NOT BE ISOLATION
AND WIDESPREAD CONDEMNATION. THE LATTER HE COULD NOT ACCEPT.

B. ANTICIPATED REACTION OF IVORY COAST TO ISRAELI DEMARCHE
SEEKING TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS. IVORY COAST INITIAL REACTION
WOULD PROBABLY BE TO PARRY THE QUESTION UNTIL GOIC HAD
HAD TIME TO CONSULT WITH OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS AND OAU.
DEMARCHE WOULD RECEIVE SERIOUS AND THOUGHTFUL CONSIDERATION
BEFORE ANY DECISION. PROSPECTS MIGHT BE IMPROVED BY
ISRAELI READINESS RENEW ITS HIGHLY POPULAR TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE TO IVORY COAST. IF SECRECY WERE A CONSIDERA-
TION, IVORIANS HAVE SHOWN THEMSELVES CAPABLE OF QUIET
DIPLOMACY, AS FOR EXAMPLE SECRET VISIT OF VORSTER TO
IVORY COAST. OAU CONSULTATIONS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY
SOON BE MADE PUBLIC HOWEVER.

C. IVORY COAST REACTION TO U.S. DEMARCHE. GOIC

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REACTION TO A U.S. DEMARCHE WOULD BE SIMILAR. IVORIANS
WOULD RECEIVE IT WITHOUT IMMEDIATE RESPONSE AND WOULD
TAKE TIME TOCONSULT WITH OTHER AFRICAN STATES BEFORE
REPLYING. AN APPROACH BY THE U.S. ON BEHALF OF ISRAEL
WOULD BE THOUGHT NORMAL AND APPROPRIATE, SINCE IVORY
COAST HAS TAKEN FOR GRANTED THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP
EXISTING BETWEEN THE US AND ISRAEL. AT TIME OF BREAK

IN RELATIONS, FOR EXAMPLE, HOUPHOUET CALLED AMBASSADOR BACK FROM WASHINGTON CONSULTATIONS IN ORDER TO ADVISE OF EXTREME PRESSURE HE WAS UNDER AND FACT THAT GOIC WAS CONSIDERING BREAK WITH ISRAEL.

C. BEST WAY TO PROCEED. AS ABOVE, DECISION ON POSSIBLE RESUMPTION WOULD BE MADE BY HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY PERSONALLY. ISRAELI DIPLOMAT ACCREDITED TO BELGIAN EMBASSY ABIDJAN HAS PLAYED VERY LOW-KEY ROLE AND HAS NOT RPT NOT SOUGHT APPOINTMENTS WITH HIGH GOIC OFFICIALS A DEMARCHE BY HIM MIGHT BE AWKWARD ALTHOUGH ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE AN INITIAL APPROACH TO THE MFA DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS WHO IS THE FORMER IVORIAN AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL. AN ISRAELI DEMARCHE IN A THIRD-COUNTRY CAPITAL IS ANOTHER POSSIBILITY. IN ANY EVENT, EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT CHANCES OF A FAVORABLE GOIC RESPONSE WOULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED IF US WERE ALSO TO ASSOCIATE ITSELF DIRECTLY AND STRONGLY WITH THE REQUEST. THIS SHOULD BE IN THE FORM OF AN APPROACH TO HOUPHOUET DIRECTLY CONVEYING A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT FORD OR SECRETARY KISSINGER EMPHASIZING IMPORTANCE WITH US ATTACHED TO POTENTIAL RESUMPTION AS A POSITIVE STEP TOWARD PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST. SUCH AN APPROACH WOULD COMBINE THE ADVANTAGES OF A PERSONAL MESSAGE WHICH IS MUCH USED IN AFRICA AND ALSO WOULD APPEAL TO HOUPHOUET'S CHERISHED IDEAL OF PEACE THROUGH DIALOGUE. ALTHOUGH A STRONG US ENDORSEMENT WOULD WEIGH HEAVILY WITH HOUPHOUET, THE KEY TO THE GOIC RESPONSE, AS INDICATED PREVIOUSLY, WOULD BE THE IVORIAN ASSESSMENT OF THE OAU REACTION AND WHETHER OTHER AFRICAN STATES WOULD ALSO RESUME RELATIONS. HOUPHOUET MIGHT WELL BE WILLING TO BE AMONG THE FIRST, BUT HE WOULD NOT BE THE ONLY ONE TO RESUME. SINCE HOUPHOUET WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY CONSULT WITH OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS BEFORE MAKING DECISION, IT MIGHT BE WISE INFORM HIM OF
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OTHER NATIONS TO WHICH ISRAELIS OR USG MAKING SIMILAR APPROACH.

3. DEPARTMENT MAY ALSO WISH TO SOLICIT VIEWS OF AMBASSADOR SITH WHO IS ON LEAVE IN ITALY AND CAN BE REACHED THROUGH MARY GENOVESE, AMEMBASSY ROME. COOKE

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